3:Nash E-5 (1964-1965)1967
NV9 Tzeltal NV9
[p.461-B] Teklum

682 704 756 location of the soul, *sč'ulel*, in the tongue, *yat*, wherein lies the particular power of the curer. This possibly suggested the mode of attack.

682 411 412 The instruments used to kill are carried by the farmers of this area most of the time. The men go to their milpa with a machete strapped to their side, a shotgun slung over their shoulder, and sometimes even a knife stuck in their waistband. They frequently interrupt work to hunt birds, rabbits, and deer. The [223] [224] shotgun does not excite suspicion or comment when it is seen. The men of Teklum are technologically prepared to kill in the course of an ordinary day's work.

682 [152] [683] The number of wounds and the thoroughness with which the job is done (see Table 1) suggest not so much the fury of the assailants as the fear motivating their act. In a witch-killing, it appears to be thought necessary to hack up the victim completely so that his power is effectively ended: one witch was cut into 32 pieces; another had 166 wounds.

682 674 656 The death acts drawn up in the local courthouse have been increasingly specific in their statements as to the wounds inflicted ever since the government's intervention in the case of an accidental death in 1950. The local authorities were threatened with a fine of 600 pesos if the details were not properly recorded. The careful measurement of the body in relation to the road and to neighboring milpas and the measurement of the size and depth of the wounds provide the screen of complicity that wards off further investigation by federal authorities and preserves local independence. There is never any questioning of suspects or attempt to solve the crime by officials. The success of the ploy is illustrated in the following account:

> Pedro had animals at the spring and had gone out early with ropes in his bag to lasso them. He was found with a rope tied around his neck hung from a *čikinib* tree. We went out and measured the length and thickness of the rope and how many centimeters it penetrated his neck. We put all these facts in the report, which gave the cause of death as suicide.
>
> At that time we had a schoolteacher in town who asked the dead man's wife why the town didn't investigate who killed him because someone must have done it. He went with the widow to the Ministerio Publico in the capital. Well, when they came out, there were all the facts in the death act. [Informant laughed heartily as he recalled this success.] He saw that we had discovered the body at 3 P.M., that the rope was 15 meters

283 the ground. This disc has two hooks to
413 which the fiber is knotted; when the disc is turned by a crank, it braids the fibers into rope. A thick board, smoothed by a metal knife (manufactured by the Indians from iron pieces bought in the city), is used to scrape the pita and remove the fiber.

407 The most complex machine that the Tzel-
[177] tal own and build is the wooden cane press, which was imported by the Spaniards to grind sugarcane (fig. 6). This machine is operated by two men, who move the rollers by a handle (*kabal-té*) at each end of the
[415] machine. The juice pressed out by the rollers drops into fluted containers made of pieces of banana tree, and finally into a pot. This
273 juice is used in the preparation of an alcoholic beverage, *chicha* (*chi-ja*, 'sweet water'), and for panela. Chicha is prepared by
[415] fermenting this juice by bran, corn, or wheat, in a special container (*canoja*) made from a fluted tree trunk. The bran or other fermenting agent is *smé-chi-já* ('mother of
[184] the chicha'). Some communities (Tenejapa, Cancuc, Oxchuc) have greater preference for this beverage than other Tzeltal groups.

• 224 A gun has become very common in hunt-
411 ing. Sometimes (Oxchuc and Tenejapa)
[412] rabbits are taken by striking them with a coa, after cornering them with the aid of dogs. Blom and LaFarge (1926–27, 2:352) state that the Tzeltal of the lowlands usually hunt wild boar with long wooden spears with fire-hardened or metal points. Traps protect the milpa as well as snaring game.

41 Cooking utensils are mainly indigenous. The usual set consists of clay containers of varying size and shape, jícaras, baskets, wooden spoons, a comal, a metate, hooks, and wooden tripods for hanging items over
177 the fire. In the last few years metal pots,
404 dishes, frying pans, boiling pans, and espe-
416 cially handy *nixtamal* mills (which are gradually displacing the grinding stone)
177 have been introduced. Other items that
207 come from the city are flashlights, small
405 kerosene lamps, watches, scissors, and (in-
412 frequently) battery radios.
416

[P 206-B]

5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Bachajón

Five wild boars' jaws and an armadillo's tail hung in the eaves so that the dogs might see them, to prevent their going away or losing heart. A swizzle stick, *mahas,* about 40 centimeters long, was used for stirring cocoa. It is made by cutting a twig above a joint with four branches. Two rat traps, *yakul,* just outside the hut, were exact models of the larger deadfalls used for jaguars (see fig. 308).

Add to this the clothes on the inhabitants backs, and the man's machete, and you will have a complete list of the worldly possessions, large and small, of a Bachajon family—altogether some forty-four different kinds of things. We assembled as many together as possible, arranging them as for a feast, and placed in the middle the small son of the house, and a little monkey of a boy, Miguel, who accompanied us to run errands (fig. 292).

FIG. 292—Bachajon boy guests.

If mud-plastered walls are added to this description, you have a typical Ocosingo Valley house. Change the grass roof to palm, it is the kind to be seen in the jungle country.

At Muxculja (*muckul ha,* "Covered Water"), in the jungle, our Indians built us a trail shelter or hut of the type called in Spanish *champa,* and in Tzeltal *tutna',* "small house." This enabled us to note the manner of building the frame-work and laying on the roof. The kind of *champa* built for us, with an A-roof and gable ends, is called *gwakac na',* "cow house"; the more common type built by the Indians when alone, a simple lean-to, is called *lestce-pat* (should be *lestce-pahk?*) "only one wall."

Our shelter being more than usually pretentious, we could observe most of the steps in building a true house, although, of course, the form here was different and the construction much lighter (figs. 293-294). It was three meters, fifty-one centimeters long by three meters wide, two meters high at the ridge-pole, one at the eaves. It had no walls. From the construction of the outline of the frame to the completed thatching it took fifty minutes for four men, later only two, working without haste.

5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9

remarkable. They make combs of one piece of wood, averaging 15 centimeters long, 8 wide, by 4 millimeters thick. The teeth are cut out of one of the long sides, running back less than half-way into the body of the piece. These teeth may be as fine as two in three millimeters, or as coarse as two in five millimeters; sometimes they are graded. The back is slightly arched. On the ends a piece of wood is left uncut, usually about four millimeters wide. The shape is not unlike the small Japanese combs to be found in most of our curio stores. The best examples are made from mahogany, chosen with a nice feeling for the effect of the grain. They are not worn, but used for combing the hair.

They make violins which are small copies of the European type. The instrument and bow are known by their Spanish names, *violina* and *arcilla*. The body is about 26 centimeters in greatest length and width; the neck, *tsutsuH-te*, projects about 30 centimeters. Save for a decoration of wavy lines on the back, the violin looks like a cheap toy fiddle. The strings, *tcucuix*, are of *mico de noche* (night-walking lemur) gut, save the G-string, which is of the usual type, bought in the towns. The bow-strings are of horse-hair treated with rosin. The tone is poor, lacking resonance.

One tobacco pipe, *bum*, was observed, which was a remarkable piece of whittling (fig. 307). It was about 14 centimeters long, made of one piece of mahogany, and apparently modeled after the American corn-cobs occasionally seen among the Ladinos. The bowl was roughly rounded, with a flat bottom. The stem was round, with a step in it at the middle, in imitation of the step in the mouth-piece of an ordinary pipe. The tube had been hollowed out with a hot wire. The tin-foil cap over the cork of a *Habanero* bottle had been hammered onto the base of the bowl, and two strips of tin-foil laid around the stem, each held on with a brad. It may be mentioned that the mahogany coloured prettily from handling and smoking, and that the flavour was sweet.

FIG. 307—Pipe.

Stools, with three legs let into a single, round piece, and rather rickety tables on the same principle, but four-legged, are made by the men, as well as the squatting-seats mentioned in describing the house.

Game furnishes an important part of the Indian's food supply. Wild boar, deer, howler monkey, *faisan*, *cojolite*, dove, and quail are hunted for food. The various large cats, alligator, lemurs, and many of the larger snakes are sought for their hides, which form a considerable article of trade. The chief weapon used in hunting is

5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9

224 411 The chief weapon used in hunting is the muzzle-loading smooth-bore gun, really a shot-gun, usually loaded with shot. Both flint-locks and percussion caps are known, and occasionally match-locks are made by the Indians themselves, the barrels being bought in the towns, or taken from old guns. Powder is carried in a cow's horn, which sometimes also serves as a flask.

Wild boar is sometimes hunted with spears, *mojara*, made of sticks with points hardened in the fire, although iron-headed spears are known, having been used in the Uprising of 1868. The latter form, however, does not appear to be made at present. Spears left over from the Uprising are highly valued and cannot be bought. [669] That they were brought out of hiding during a period of unrest at Bachajon in 1915 is considered one of the proofs that a real revolt was planned at that time.

224 231 Dogs take part in the chase, their use being connected with some curious superstitions. It is a common practice in Mexico to cut a

224

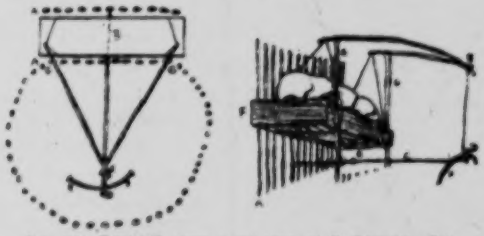

Fig. 308—Deadfall, from a rat trap at El Encanto, Chis. A. Plan. B. Sketch of essential parts.

224 231 piece off a dog's ear and keep it in the house if he shows a tendency to roam, or to go hunting alone. If he will not follow a trail, a similar piece is cut off and thrown on it. The Indians keep jaw-bones or other trophies of animals killed with the dogs' help hung in a conspicuous place under the eaves of the house; the object being to remind the dogs of their achievements, and to keep them from losing heart during a period of no hunting.

223 Birds, as well as being hunted, are caught with snares and with limed twigs.

224 Dead-falls, *yakul*, are used to trap animals, both for game, and to protect the fields. They are substantially all of one pattern, the drawing for which was taken from a rat-trap in the house at El Encanto (fig. 308). The deadfall consists essentially of a log, F, weighted with stones, held suspended in two slings, which hang from the ends of two sticks, EE, resting over two forked uprights, GG. The two sticks cross each other at the further end, where they are

5: Blom & LaFarge A,E-4,5 (1925) 1927 NV9 Tzeltal NV9

tied by a string carried down to an arched stick, H, stuck in the ground. This string, by holding down the far ends, counterbalances the weight of the fall at the other ends. At the end of the string the cross-stick, D, holds it against the arch; it, in turn, is held by the trigger, C, one end of which braces against it, the other end against the far side of the trap, passing under the deadfall. A circular fence of sticks prevents an animal from getting at the outer part of the trap. A straight fence on the other side of the fall necessitates its entering through the entrance, AA, to get at the bait, B, on the trigger. The animal dislodges the trigger, releasing D and with it the string. The outer ends of the sticks fly up, and the weighted log falls. In the rat trap, the log and stones came to at least three kilograms, arranged to fall through a space of about ten centimeters, other traps being in proportion.

When hunting with a gun, a red fruit called *ahoon* is frequently rubbed on the shot, and *palma bendita, tcul-tĕc-wil can,* the palm used in church decorations, is used for the wad. This prevents the bullet "from getting tired" before it reaches its mark.

Meat obtained while hunting, if it cannot be carried immediately to the house, is dried on a rack, *tcax.*

The primary method of carrying goods of all kinds is by the tump-line, for which, as has been said in the discussion of physical and other characteristics, these people are very well adapted. The tump-line, *pak,* is a broad strip of inner bark, or of cow-hide. For their ordinary uses, this is a single strip, the ends being attached to a net (q. v.) of their own manufacture. When a package too bulky for the net is carried, a long strap is used with the ends tied together. This is looped through itself, around the package, so that it hangs in two slings. Additional straps may be attached to the line where it passes over the ears, to wrap around the sides of the burden. A flat piece of cowhide, *tcokHax,* is worn against the back, to protect the carrier from the chafing of his load. Both men and women use the tump-line, the carrying of objects on the head being unusual.

Formerly the Indians of this district are said to have owned a good many mules and horses for packing, which they lost during the recent political disturbances. Many of them know something about packing. At present, however, few if any own cattle of any kind.

The highland rivers do not, on the whole, lend themselves to water travel, although the Bachajon territory reaches to the Bascan, Tulija, and other more amenable water-ways. Canoes are known only as introductions of German or Ladino ranchers. The natives use a

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970 NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

805 lating the time of day; when I questioned them as to the hour, they were often as much as an hour off, usually behind.

Most activities are ordered with reference to the Gregorian calendar, but the twenty-day Maya calendrical month, defined as "twenty days or a month" is used in much the same way that we use "a fortnight." The Indians consider the moon to be an uncertain indicator of time, since "she does not walk well." But the moon is important in the culture: people note its different phases and are especially aware of the phase under which a child is born—an important sign for the newborn's future. If a baby is born at the full moon, he is expected to mature more readily. The full moon also signifies a propitious time for undertaking certain activities, such as cutting wood for the main posts of a house and cutting palm for the roof.

805 821 [856] [787]

The Daily Schedule

Daily activities are organized by traditional economic pursuits. The woman is the first one to rise in the morning. She gets up at dawn, lights the fire, and sets a jar of water to boil for coffee. She grinds the nixtamal cooked the night before on the stone grinding board, or takes it to the mill in the center. She then makes tortillas either by hand or with a press; a recent innovation made of two hinged pieces of wood in which the ball of dough is set between pieces of plastic paper.

512 462 [252] [412] [177] [178]

The men of the household are served first, followed by the boys; the women and girls eat last. As soon as they have eaten, the men and boys who have finished the required three years of schooling go out to the fields to work. They walk single file even in the streets of the town, the father preceding his sons. Each carries a machete, net bag, tumpline, and sheepskin back-protector if he plans to carry any loads. Many bring shotguns as well in order to hunt for field rats, raccoon, or the burrowing animals they find in the fields.

[264] [481] [482] [411] [224]

After the men leave, the women go to the porch and "seize their work." The children go to school, which begins at eight-thirty in the morning and continues until five o'clock in the evening. They return home for lunch, a meal of tortillas, coffee, and sometimes beans or chayote when it is in season.

[857] [872] [264]